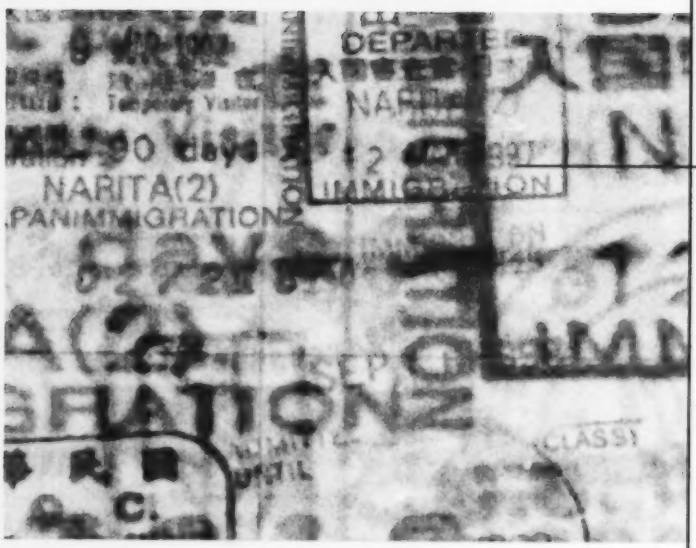

Increasing Western Canadian Immigration

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CanadaWest Foundation

BUILDING THE NEW WEST
REPORT #31

BUILDING THE NEW WEST

This report is part of the Canada West Foundation's **Building the New West (BNW) Project,** a multi-year research and public consultation initiative focused on the strategic positioning of western Canada within the global economy.

Five key priorities emerged from an extensive research and consultation process and provide a framework for the Building the New West Project:

- the West must create the tools to attract, retain, and build HUMAN CAPITAL;
- the West must continue ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION;
- the West must strengthen its TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE;
- the West must promote the global competitiveness of its MAJOR CITIES; and
- the West must develop new ways of facilitating REGIONAL COORDINATION.

To learn more about the BNW Project, please visit the Canada West Foundation website (**www.cwf.ca**).

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Executive Summary

Western Canada's unique demographic and employment circumstances suggest that increased immigration activity can have beneficial outcomes–both in short and long term. Outside of Vancouver, the West does not draw its proportionate share of immigrants and therefore loses ground to Ontario and Quebec in the economic value that immigrant bring. In the last 25 years, the Prairie provinces' share of immigrants has been cut in half–from 21% in the early 1980s to under 10% for most of the last decade.

These declining immigration levels represent a potentially serious and uniquely western concern. Immigration's importance to the future of the region is tied to a number of demographic trends and economic realities facing the West: labour shortages; the need to grow the regional economy; future population needs; and the value of cultural diversity in both our communities and our workplaces.

The main arguments in favour of increasing immigration are:

- **Immigrants can help fill labour force shortages.** Immigrants are an attractive solution to labour shortages as they arrive in Canada at working age, are trained abroad, and possess relatively higher levels of education.

- **Immigrants are active and contributing members of the workforce.** After a period of transition to the needs of the Canadian workplace, immigrants have relatively lower unemployment rates. Immigrants are also willing to accept lower paying positions in order to remain in the workforce.

- **Immigrants help support our public services.** Immigrants are net contributors to public services, paying in more than they take out. This subsidizes the consumption of public services by those born in Canada, and lowers the overall cost to everyone of maintaining services.

- **Immigrants create jobs for Canadians.** A number of immigrants are accepted to Canada based on their job-creation and entrepreneurial potential. Hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of dollar of GDP activity derive from immigrant business activity.

- **Immigrants expand trade markets.** Immigrants possess country-specific knowledge of language, home markets, and business contacts that can reduce the transaction costs of trade and expand the market. Estimates show that a 10% increase in immigration is correlated with a 1% increase in exports.

- **Immigration enhances business innovation.** Immigrants have had exposure to different business and cultural environments and therefore can offer new ideas and innovative business solutions that offer the potential to grow the Canadian economy.

- **Immigration has humanitarian benefits.** Canada's refugee policy has cultivated a desirable image of a compassionate nation, and has contributed greatly to Canada's diversity as refugees tend to come from non-traditional immigrant source countries. Refugees also make economic contributions.

Current immigration policy and trends are limiting the value of these benefits to the West. Proportionately, the region tends to draw fewer of the economic classes of immigrants, and more of family and refugees classes. Nearly all immigrants to western Canada settle within the major urban centres, therefore the full benefits of immigration are not felt in rural areas. Although immigrants are more highly educated, recent immigrants are not as engaged in the workforce as Canadian-born residents due to problems recognizing foreign credentials.

Positive immigration outcomes for western Canada depend on: our ability to develop programs of integration that work better and that start before immigrants arrive; professional associations and governments working together to best recognize the skills and education that immigrants possess, and to target and select immigrants that possess those skills that will be taken as equivalent; and reworking selection criteria to allow for the largest possible disbursement of immigrants into high needs areas such as rural and smaller centres.

IMMIGRANT CLASSES IN CANADA

Economic Classes:

Skilled Workers

- *Federal Skilled Workers* – assessed on their ability to become economically established in Canada, on the basis of a points system. Points are awarded for education, proficiency in French or English, work experience, age, arranged employment and adaptability (criteria relating to previous work in Canada, spouse, and family).
- *Quebec Skilled Workers* – must intend to reside in Quebec, and have been selected by a Quebec immigration agent according to Quebec's selection grid.

Provincial Nominees – programs where provinces to have a direct role in choosing skilled workers. Immigrants who are offered full-time, permanent employment in a province with a provincial nominee program can be nominated by the province for permanent residency.

Business Immigrants

- *Investor* – a person who has business experience, has a legally obtained net worth of at least $800,000 and indicates in writing that they have made, or intend to make, an investment in Canada of at least $400,000.
- *Entrepreneur* – a person who has business experience, has a legally obtained minimum net worth of $300,000, controls more than 33% equity in a Canadian business, participates in active and ongoing management of the business and creates at least a full-time equivalent job for a citizen or permanent resident other than the entrepreneur or their family.
- *Self-Employed Persons* – must have relevant experience, intention and ability to be self-employed, and be able to make a significant contribution to cultural activities, athletics, or the purchase and management of a farm.

Live-in Caregivers – must have graduated from secondary school, training and/or experience as a care-giver, English and/or French ability, and a contract with a future employer.

Family Classes:

Family – sponsored by a family member for entrance into Canada: a spouse, common-law partner or conjugal partner, child (adopted or natural), parents, grandparents or other relative, if they are the sponsor's closest relative.

Spouse or Common-law partner in Canada – spouse must have temporary resident status, and must cohabit with the sponsor in Canada.

Protected Person Classes:

Convention Refugees abroad – persons who have a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion.

Humanitarian-protected Persons abroad – country of asylum class: those in need of resettlement because they are outside their countries of nationality and habitual residence, and have been and continue to be seriously and permanently affected by civil war, armed conflict or massive violations of human rights in each of those countries.

Source Country Class – persons who are in refugee-like conditions because of civil war or armed conflict, or in countries where they are subject to persecution and violation of human rights.

Why Increase Immigration in the West?

A report on increasing immigration can easily raise a few eyebrows. Increasing immigration is not a popular idea—polling suggests it lacks public support, and there are a host of problems associated with current immigration policies that lend to a high degree of skepticism. New immigrants do not immediately integrate into the economy or the community outside their ethnic background. Immigrants tend to cluster in our largest cities (Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto), magnifying the impact of social change in those areas. The benefits of immigration are not felt or recognized by the country as a whole. The foreign credentials and training of immigrants may hold less value in the Canadian labour market, resulting in diminished economic contributions.

Yet, the importance of immigration to regional population growth keeps it a paramount western Canadian concern. Both Manitoba and Saskatchewan have experienced low or negative population growth rates in the past few years and BC, which had significant population growth in the mid 1980s-1990s, has experienced tapering growth because of its weakening economic position (Leeder 2002). Alberta is the lone exception, with high levels of inter-provincial migration. However, future projections for all four provinces suggest declining population growth due to the aging population and lower fertility rates.

Lower rates of growth alone are not a problem, but can be a troubling economic issue if they lead to labour shortages. Depending on the severity of the shortage and the availability of replacement technology, a decline in human capital may lower the economic output of the region. In addition, a smaller workforce supporting a relatively larger aging population could prove to be a significant burden for individuals and government spending. Against this backdrop, the effectiveness and future levels of regional immigration become a matter of public concern. Not surprisingly, all four western governments have entered into the immigration policy field, directly marketing their provinces to immigrants abroad in hopes of landing the most highly skilled and coveted immigrants.

Increasing Western Canadian Immigration builds on and updates Canada West's previous work on immigration with a current data perspective on the challenges facing the new West. This immigration research is one part of a human capital research focus for the Canada West Foundation that also includes studies on post-secondary education and Aboriginal employment strategies.

Increasing Western Canadian Immigration will be the first of a series of reports looking at various aspects of immigration policy in the West. This first report aims to answer a number of immigration-related questions, including:

- Why does immigration matter for western Canada?
- What current trends impact immigration policy?
- What do western Canadians think about immigration?

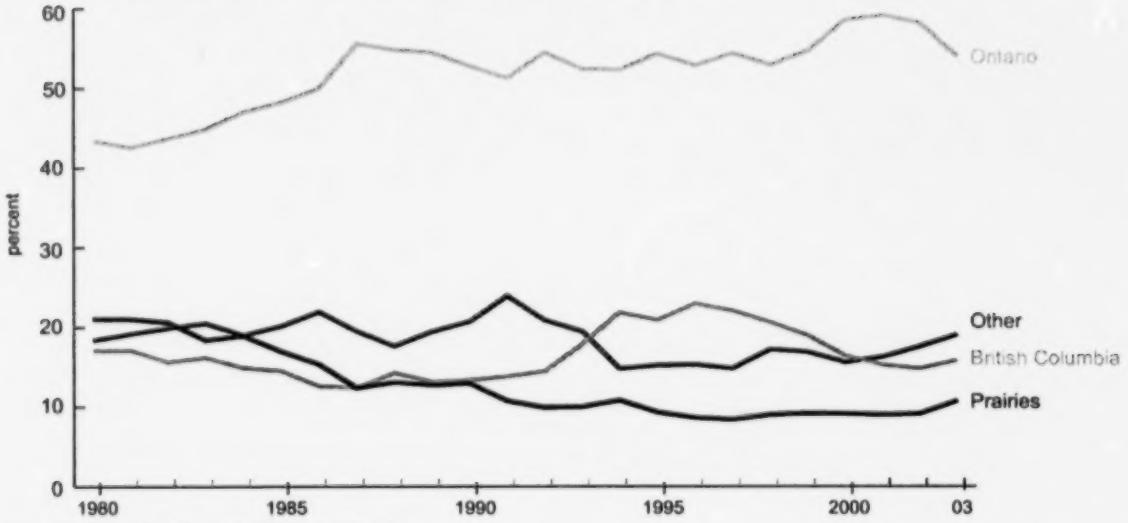
As the title suggests, this report begins with the assumption that western Canada has a number of future needs, including more labour, a larger tax base, the need for cultural diversity, and the need to maintain and grow population. Underscoring this view is the belief that better immigration policy and more effective integration strategies can be created. What follows is an explanation of how appropriate immigration policy can address Western Canada's future needs.

Immigration's Importance to Western Canada

Throughout our region's history, Canada has used immigration policy as a tool to populate the area and fuel the western Canadian economy. In the early 20th century, Canadian immigration policy was geared towards attracting immigrants to settle in the West in order to capitalize on the fertile land. The policy was clear – as soon as immigrants landed in Halifax, they were given a one-way ticket to the Prairies (DeVoretz 2003). From the immigrants who settled the prairies to the immigrants who built its railways, the presence of these groups was necessary in establishing the foundation of a strong West.

Fast forwarding to today, immigration in the West is in decline. Outside of BC, the West's overall share of immigrant levels has been dropping dramatically. In the last 25 years, the Prairie provinces' share of immigrants has been cut in half—from 21% in the early 1980s to under 10% for most of the last decade (Figure 1). While the total number of immigrants to Canada increased throughout the 1980s and 90s, the number of immigrants heading to the Prairies actually decreased from 30,000 in 1980 to 24,000

Figure 1: Distribution of Arriving Immigrants by Region (1980-2003)



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004

in 2003. Over this time, each of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba has seen their relative share of immigrants head instead to Ontario and BC.

These declining immigration levels represent a potentially serious and uniquely western concern. Immigration's importance to the future of the region is tied to a number of demographic trends and economic realities facing the West: labour shortages; the need to grow the regional economy; future population needs; and, the value of cultural diversity in both our communities and our workplaces.

In the higher output economies of Alberta and BC, immigrants represent the means to maintain momentum as natural population growth rates decline. In Saskatchewan, immigrants represent a replacement population for those lost to interprovincial migration, replacements for aging labour in agriculture industries and access to innovation through new ideas and international experiences. Manitoba's current labour needs and aggressive plans for population growth already rely heavily on increased immigration.

The main arguments in favour of increased and effective immigration in western Canada are outlined in the following sections.

Reason #1:

Immigrants can help fill labour-force gaps.

Western Canada faces the possibility of a future skilled labour shortage caused by, among other things, the upcoming retirement of the baby boomer cohort. The signs of current and future skilled labour shortages in the West are plentiful and include:

- Surveys conducted by Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses (CFIB) revealed that nearly half of all small to medium sized enterprises considered a qualified labour shortage to be a major problem (2001). The provinces most concerned about the issue were Manitoba (59.3%) and Alberta (54.6%). In the small-medium sized business sector, the 2001 CFIB survey states that one out of every twenty jobs remains unfilled because of a lack of skilled workers.

- The Alberta government has found that severe shortages exist in health care, information and communications technology, and construction (Alberta Labour Force Planning Committee 2001).

- Statistics from the BC government state that education and health services, utilities, government, and forestry industries will most likely face labour shortages within the next 10 years (1999).

- A study by the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) states that BC is facing a serious trades and technical skills shortage. The ITAC report, released in 2001, states the aging workforce combined with economic growth will result in the creation of 700,000 jobs by 2008. Current Canadian-training programs are insufficient to meet this demand.

- An unemployment rate of less than 3% is considered a labour shortage; the unemployment rate in Alberta for professional occupations in health was 0.5% in 2000 (Alberta Labour Force Planning Committee 2001).

- Alberta and Manitoba unemployment rates are already among the lowest in the country–5.0% for both in March 2004–2.5% less than the national rate (Statistics Canada 2004).

Proposed solutions to alleviate this labour shortage include: increased engagement of groups with lower labour force participation rates (e.g., Aboriginal people, women), reforming the mandatory retirement age, increased training for youth, and increased immigration. However, immigrants are a particularly attractive solution as most immigrants arrive in Canada at the working age, are trained abroad, and possess relatively high levels of education.

Higher levels of immigration alone will not work–policy direction to integrate immigrants into the workforce is needed to ensure that the benefits of immigration can accrue. For example, despite a well-documented shortage in physicians in Alberta, 160 immigrant physicians are not working in their field (Summerfield 2002). To be successful, immigration policies must also include measures to fill these labour gaps by streamlining the immigration process and easing the issues associated with recognition of foreign credentials and education.

The incentive to resolve immigrant labour inefficiencies is a financial one. Current and future labour shortages will dramatically reduce the region's economic potential. In Alberta alone, the current net economic loss due to unrecognized foreign credentials in health is estimated to be between $34 million and $64 million a year (Emery 2002).

Before leaving this section it is worth noting that there are those who suggest that Canada's future labour shortages have been overstated. They argue that high levels of youth unemployment, the high number of graduates not working in their areas of formal education, and the large segment of workers who are forced to work part-time because of the lack of full-time positions reflect an underutilized workforce, not a gap (Schetagne 2001).

The unknown nature of work in the future is also said to be a significant factor in determining whether or not there will be a shortage. Some firms may invest in more technology and capital to compensate for shortages in labour, or may be able to find ways to re-tool their production processes to tap other areas of available skilled labour (Schetagne 2001). On the other hand, future labour mobility trends will also play a role as the brain drain of Canada's high skilled workforce to the United States and other countries will affect the number of Canadian-born entrants to the labour force.

While the size and nature of this labour gap is of some debate, increasing immigration levels and better engaging those immigrants in economic activity will create a net economic output advantage for the region as a whole.

Reason #2

Immigrants are active and contributing parts of the workforce.

The quality and quantity of our overall human resources in western Canada is a contributing factor to economic growth (CIC 2001); the ability to draw from a deep, talent pool of skilled workers is instrumental to a technological economy's development. Immigrants, who have higher education levels and training relative to Canadian-born populations, have the potential to make significant contributions to this talent pool.

Immigrants also more readily accept lower paying positions and can be easily drawn upon to bolster the labour market when the economy begins to pick up steam (Frenette and Morissette 2003). Over time, average immigrant unemployment rates are lower than Canadian-born rates, even though they may earn less full-time income–representative of immigrants willingness to accept lower pay to remain in the active workforce. For example, fifteen or more years after their arrival, immigrants from 1981-85 have an unemployment rate of 6.6% versus 7.4% for Canadian-born residents, even though they have been unable to earn wages equivalent to Canadian-born workers (Statistics Canada 2003, Frenette and Morissette 2003).

Immigrants located in western Canada are even more likely to be an active part of the workforce—unemployment rates for all western immigrants (including those who have recently immigrated) are similar to Canadian-born rates. Immigrants in Edmonton, Winnipeg and Regina are particularly active in the workforce, with lower unemployment rates for immigrants in these cities than for Canadian-born residents (Statistics Canada 2003).

Reason #3

Immigrants support our public services.

The prospect of a shrinking tax base due to a smaller workforce has implications for public funding models, particularly for expensive services such as health care and education. The future quality of health care, an issue of utmost importance to western Canadians (Berdahl 2003), depends in part on an increase in the immigrant working age population to help pay for our future needs. Immigrant earnings expand the tax base, which in turn provides valuable funding to the social safety net.

Because the structure of the social safety net allows immigrants immediate access to social services upon their arrival into Canada, there is a widely held assumption that a number of immigrants take advantage of this policy. Yet research has proven this to be a myth. Immigrants are net contributors to services and, on average, subsidize the consumption of public services by those born in Canada. Due to proportionately lower use of services, immigrant households that entered Canada between 1981-85 transferred $1,310 on average to Canadian-born households in 1990 (Akbari 1995). Globerman (1992) also found that while a minority of immigrants go on welfare when they first arrive, over time they use less social services than those born in Canada.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada's (CIC) mandate to ensure that 60% of applicants are from the economic class further takes advantage of the economic benefits of immigration. To date, three of the four western provinces (excluding Saskatchewan) have benefited from meeting this goal. Policies that emphasize the entrance of economic class immigrants have the potential to strengthen the social safety net of the province.

Reason #4

Immigrants create more jobs for all Canadians.

The immigrant business class is particularly important to regional growth as it consists of immigrants allowed into Canada specifically to create businesses and jobs that are valuable to national and provincial economies. According to CIC, business class immigrants generated 101,241 jobs from 1986-1992. Estimates state that the cumulative contribution of business immigrants to the GDP was $2.6 billion from 1986-1990, representing approximately 3% growth in the GDP (Kunin 1995).

A subclass of business class immigrants are those immigrants entering Canada to pursue entrepreneurial enterprises. This entrepreneur subclass brought over $50 million of investment to western Canada in 2002 (Figure 2). Alberta and BC attracted the most western entrepreneur investment, which created more than 800 full- or part-time jobs in the region. Saskatchewan and Manitoba, however, have not seen significant gains from entrepreneur investment. To this end, public consultations on immigration held by the Saskatchewan government in 2000 highlighted the need for more business immigrants.

Finally it is worth noting that a basic economic benefit of immigration is created by simply expanding the market for goods and increasing the overall demand for labour. Immigrants are consumers of goods and purchasers of property (Grubel 1992). This spending creates employment opportunities, for both immigrants and Canadian-born residents.

Figure 2: Entrepreneur Investment by Province, 2002

PROVINCE OR TERRITORY	Entrepreneurs Meeting the Terms of the CIC	Total Entrepreneur Investment	Percentage of Investment	Full-Time Jobs Created	Percentage of Full-Time Investment	Part-Time Jobs Created	Percentage of Part-Time Jobs
British Columbia	245	$38,531,288	31.4%	289	26.1%	276	36.70%
Alberta	81	$10,547,244	8.6%	137	12.4%	116	15.40%
Manitoba	3	$487,000	0.4%	3	0.3%	9	1.20%
Saskatchewan	1	$800,000	0.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.00%
Rest of Canada	560	$72,250,181	58.8%	679	61.3%	352	46.7%

Source: Entrepeneur Monitoring Information System report run in November 2003

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The Wage Gap and Other Problems in Valuing the Contributions of Immigrants

Due to a considerable wage gap between immigrant and Canadian-born earnings, it has been argued that the benefits of immigration are overstated—it can take many years for immigrants to "catch up" to the earnings levels of those born in Canada (Benjamin and Baker 1994). Recent analysis would also suggest that this gap is widening at the point of entry, making it even more difficult for immigrants to "catch up" (Frenette and Morisette 2003).

There are a number causes for the existence of this wage gap. As new entrants to the Canadian work environment, immigrants are most vulnerable to business cycle fluctuations (Frenette and Morisette 2003). Economic downturns will disproportionately affect those on the periphery of the employment market, meaning new immigrants will have more difficulty keeping a job and finding employment. Immigration policy priorities that emphasize family reunification and humanitarian concerns over economic applicants can also contribute to the gap (Bloom et. al 1995).

This gap is largely a function of policy and systemic issues. The benefits of immigration are not maximized because of a number of structural barriers. At the forefront are the difficulties associated with recognizing the foreign credentials of immigrants. In spite of higher levels of education compared to Canadian-born residents, immigrants are often not initially employed in their fields of training. Shaafsma and Sweetnam (2001) found that education and work experiences from an immigrant's host country can yield little or no return on earnings.

The human capital acquired abroad is an unclear signal of ability to prospective employers as educational standards and work experience differ among countries. As a result, immigrant earnings may be lower initially since credit constraints and lack of access to job contacts may result in taking a job below their skill set (Green 1999). In some cases this can be understandable, particularly when the foreign credentials are known to be of lesser value. Yet in other circumstances, the barrier can be a reflection of a lack of information on the nature of these foreign programs.

Getting employers and professional associations to acknowledge overseas experience can be difficult: in a study conducted in 2000 by PricewaterhouseCoopers, 40% of employers admitted to screening out applications of individuals who attended foreign institutions (Immen 2004). Overcoming these barriers to employment requires that immigrants obtain the needed credentials that will satisfy employers. In this regard, provincial policies have the ability to expedite the recognition of foreign skills, thereby moving to close this wage gap.

The message here is that effective immigration policies could reduce the time period for immigrants to catch up and overtake Canadian-born wage earners. One strong move towards more effective immigration policy across the West is the provincial nominee programs that all western provinces have introduced. These federal-provincial immigration arrangements allow provincial businesses and governments to find those immigrants who can best fill labour gaps and draw investment to the province. In this manner the time to integrate within the economy can be reduced as specific immigrants, with skills that are valued, can be directed to the province.

Reason #5

Immigrants expand trade markets.

Immigrants benefit the West by bringing with them a wealth of information about their own cultures, representing an asset to Canadian business: "by virtue of links to their home countries, they may realize lower costs associated with foreign trade and thereby be more likely to trade than Canadian-born residents" (Head and Ries 1998). To maximize this benefit, firms opening up to international trade have been encouraged to adopt migration-linked human resource techniques (Keely 2003). Immigrants possess country-specific knowledge of language, home markets, and business contacts that can reduce the transaction costs of trade and expand the market.

International market knowledge creates financial opportunity. Head and Ries (1995) found that the average Canadian immigrant in 1992 generated an additional $3,000 in exports. Their estimates show that a 10% increase in immigration is correlated with a 1% increase in exports. They also find that East Asian immigrants have the most significant influence on trade relative to other ethnicities. BC, which has the highest percentage of Asians relative to the other western

provinces, also exports higher volumes of merchandise to Asia (Roach 2003).

Asian immigration represents a significant growth opportunity for the West, as there is relatively little western Canadian trade activity with Asia compared to trade with the United States (Roach 2003). Increasing trade flows to a largely untapped foreign market can expand the economy, move the West away from dependence on the US market, and diversify risk by increasing the number of trade partners.

Capitalizing on this opportunity, however, requires trade and marketing skills that are in short supply across the West. According to a report released by the Manitoba government on "High Demand Occupations in 2003," individuals skilled in marketing and export development are in great demand. These skills entail the "ability to identify customer/client needs and relate them to products and services…an ability to find new sales opportunities in export markets." Targeting these skills through immigration represents an opportunity to address this need and expand economic markets for western products.

Reason #6
Immigration enhances business innovation.

Immigration's cultural benefits can have positive impacts on both the quality of life in a region and on economic output. Toronto Star columnist David Crane writes, "Immigration – attracting talent from elsewhere – is a powerful force of creativity, innovation and prosperity." The benefits of a diverse society include the flexibility to adapt, greater creativity, a wider range of ideas and solutions, and more personal freedom (Thomas 1992).

These social and cultural reasons for immigration should not be overlooked. Creative and culturally diverse cities are said to be a factor in driving a vibrant economy (Florida 2004). International talent is attracted to areas where adjustment and integration into the community is straightforward. Easy access to ethnic grocery stores and restaurants, entertainment, and the arts is an important factor in assisting this adjustment. There is a positive correlation between the number of immigrants and cultural diversity – the top three Canadian cities attracting immigrants are known for a profusion of culture. This critical mass of diversity is instrumental in attracting a class of talented immigrants who can contribute to innovation and growth (Florida 2004).

Canadian–born workers also derive a positive benefit from working alongside immigrant workers, as an individual from a different culture can bring new ideas to dealing with issues (Thomas 1992). New ideas and innovative business solutions help grow economies and create the new job opportunities that have a double benefit of attracting more immigrants and drawing Canadian-born workers from other areas.

Unfortunately, outside Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, this type of benefit is not as strong. Rural and small town western Canada, in particular, receive few of the cultural and innovation benefits from immigration. They simply lack the critical mass of immigrants, as immigrants are not drawn to smaller centres in sufficient numbers. Indeed, when faced with a choice of living destinations, some immigrants even forego higher wages and employment prospects to live within their own ethnic community (Chiswick and Miller 2000). Few smaller centres and rural areas can create a welcoming environment that can compete with larger centres. Increased immigration and targeted immigration policies may offer the opportunity to spread the benefits of immigration into these smaller centres that are not known for their ethnic diversity.

A cultural downside of the concentration of immigrants in larger centres is that they can be negatively associated with gang violence and tightly enclosed immigrant enclaves. Detractors view immigrants as a diverse culture of sub-communities that coexist, but do not interact. Collacott (2003) argues that full-fledged ethnic ghettos may emerge in the future because of these divisions. However, these fears of escalating crime due to immigration appear unfounded: research has shown that immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated relative to Canadian-born residents (CIC 2000).

Reason #7
Immigration has humanitarian benefits.

Beyond economic arguments, there is a significant humanitarian element to immigration. Canada has become a haven for those seeking refuge from persecution – a tradition of compassion that has been fostered by Canada's refugee policy. All refugee claimants are given the right to due process and access to social services. Western Canada has received its fair share of refugees. The famous plight of the Vietnamese boat people brought 25,000 refugees to the West in the early 1980s (CBC Archives 2004). For their efforts, Canada received the Nansen medal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Canada's commitment to maintaining a humanitarian tradition is strongly tied to the issue of cultural diversity. In 2002, the top five source countries for the refugee class were Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Colombia, and China. Canada's refugee policy has cultivated a desirable image of a compassionate nation, and has contributed greatly to Canada's diversity as refugees tend to come from non-traditional immigrant source countries.

Refugee status itself does not diminish the economic contributions that refugees may make. Among the refugee class of immigrants there are those who possess needed skills and education and a strong willingness to work that make positive contributions to the region.

Summary

Increased immigration represents an economic and social opportunity for all western Canadians. Combined with policy improvement, these benefits make a compelling case for increasing immigration levels in western Canada. Immigration has the potential to create jobs, strengthen the social safety net, fill labour gaps, and enhance our cities' diversity and attractiveness. The labour market characteristics, demographic composition, and economic realities of the West suggest that increasing immigration can make a positive contribution to the future economic prosperity of the region.

Immigration Trends in Western Canada

Immigration patterns have changed over the history of Canada. As Canadian immigration policy changed to react to the domestic and international environment, the source country, frequency, and demographic make-up of immigrants was altered. The next section outlines the current immigration trends at play in the West.

1. Provincial Distribution of Immigrants

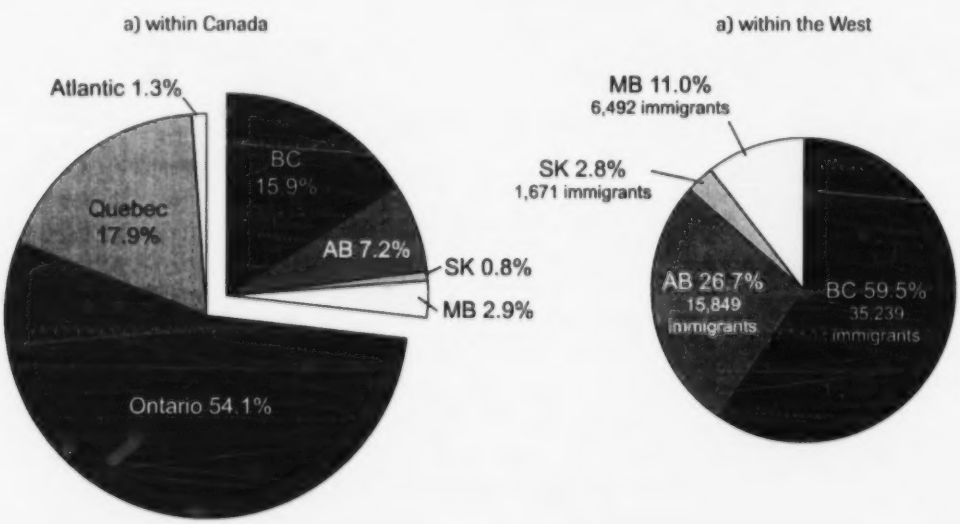
Western provinces attract about one-quarter of Canada's new residents. Western Canada became home to 59,251 of Canada's 221,476 new permanent residents in 2003 or 26.7% (Figure 3). British Columbia receives far and away the most immigrants to the western provinces, with almost 60% of the 2003 total settling there. Alberta attracted 27% of those who landed in western Canada, and Saskatchewan and Manitoba combined attracted about 14%.

2. Urban Settlement

Cities are the most popular places for immigrants to settle. Of the immigrants who came to Canada in 2001, 94% lived in cities after their arrival in Canada (Statistics Canada 2003a).

For immigrants who arrived to Canada in 2003, Toronto was the destination of choice (44.0%), almost three times higher

Figure 3: Immigrant Distribution 2003



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004

than the next closest cities of Montreal (15.1%) and Vancouver (13.9%). Well behind these "big three" destinations were Calgary (4.2%), Ottawa-Gatineau (3.1%), Winnipeg (2.3%), and Edmonton (2.2%) (CIC 2004).

Western cities represent four of the top seven destinations for new Canadians. Between 1993 and 2003, 400,000 immigrants settled in Vancouver, 88,000 in Calgary, 55,000 in Edmonton and 40,000 in Winnipeg (Figure 4). Regina (7,000) and Saskatoon (9,000), on the other hand, have drawn far fewer residents; less than 1000 immigrants a year settled in each of Saskatchewan's urban centres.

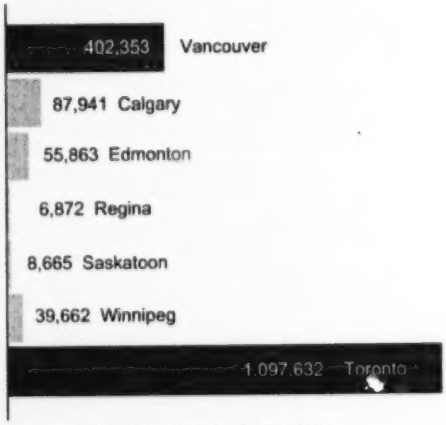
Cities draw the majority of immigrants for many reasons. Many immigrants come from urban places and chose to remain urban, or immigrants may find it easier to tap into the existing social network in these communities, or simply because urban areas are the places where most Canadians also live. According to a Statistics Canada (2003) survey of recent immigrants, 59% settled in large cities because they have family or friends already living there, and approximately 75% said they felt there was an immigrant network in the three largest cities that appealed to them.

3. Provincial Trends

British Columbia

Immigration has been the major contributor to BC population growth in recent years; during the period 1996-2001 the immigrant population of BC grew by 11.8% while the overall population growth was 4.9% (BC Stats 2003). BC has consistently been home to a larger proportion of immigrants than the other western provinces, and over the last several decades, immigration has increasingly been from Pacific Rim and other Asian countries. Between 1990 and 1999, 35% of all the immigrants to Canada from Hong Kong settled in BC. For those immigrants who came to Canada in 2003, 15.9% (35,239) settled in BC—above BC's 12.8% share of the total Canadian population (CIC 2004).

Figure 4: Immigration to Major Centers 1993-2003



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004

Alberta

Immigrants to Alberta have settled very heavily in the province's major cities: 89% of the 15,849 immigrants to Alberta in 2003 settled in Calgary and Edmonton. Fifty-nine percent of immigrants settled in Calgary alone. Alberta's total share of 2003 immigrants was 7.2%, less than Alberta's 9.9% share of the Canadian population.

While Alberta has led the country in population growth (1.6% annually, double the national rate), 49.5% of that growth has been from interprovincial migration, and only 13.7% is a result of direct immigration (Alberta Learning 2003). Hidden in these figures would be recent immigrants who are among these interprovincial migrants.

Saskatchewan

While immigrants compose 18% of the Canadian population, immigrants make up only 5% of the population of Saskatchewan (Elliot 2003). New immigration to the province for 2003 was less than 1% (1,671) of all immigrants who came to Canada (CIC 2004).

Not only does Saskatchewan have difficulty attracting immigrants, it also has problems with retaining those who originally land in Saskatchewan. Just over half (57%) of the immigrants who settled in Saskatchewan between 1991 and 2001 stayed, a significantly smaller proportion than in either Alberta, which retains 86% of its immigrants, or Manitoba, which retains 78%.

A compounding concern for Saskatchewan is that it has not been receiving a high number of immigrants from the economic class. Approximately equal numbers of immigrants from each of the three classes (economic, family and protected persons) land in Saskatchewan each year, which is very different from CIC's plans of 60% from the economic class and 40% from the other two classes. This means that Saskatchewan is not

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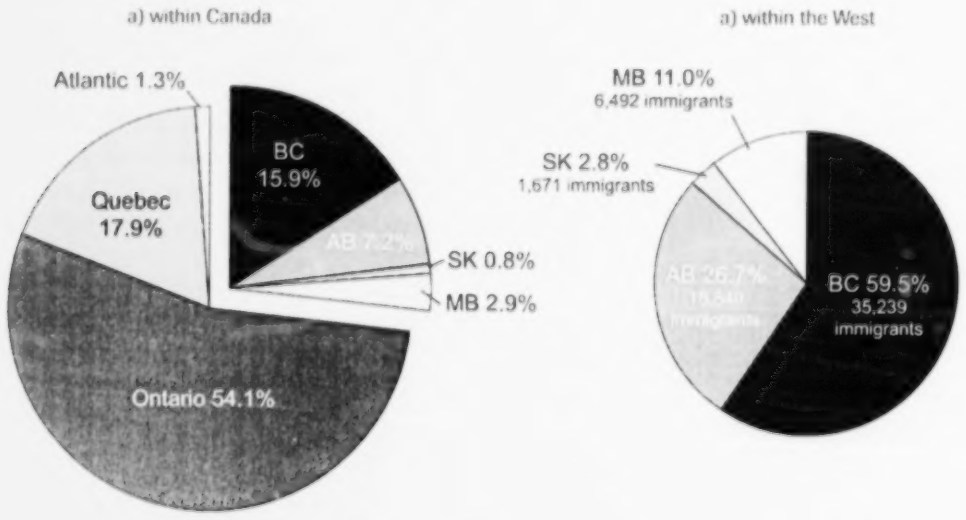

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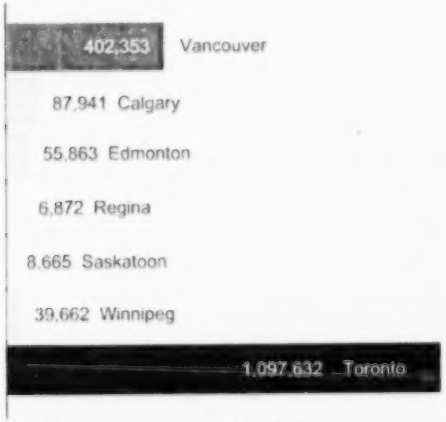

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getting as many immigrants who are selected and prepared, with higher levels of skills and education, to integrate into the provincial economy (Elliot 2003).

Manitoba

Manitoba is at the forefront of provincial involvement in immigration. It is setting aggressive goals, signing strategic agreements with the federal government and making a concerted effort to attract and retain immigrants to Manitoba. The first tripartite agreement between the federal government, the Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg with respect to private refugee sponsorship was signed in 2002, and Manitoba was the first province to extend its Federal-Provincial agreement on immigration indefinitely. Most (78%) of the immigrants who arrived in Canada under provincial nominees programs in 2002 came to Manitoba.

In 2003, Manitoba was the destination of 2.9% (6,492) of Canada's 221,476 immigrants-nearly a full percent point increase over 2000-2002 totals (CIC 2004). Manitoba has set its goal at attracting a percentage of immigrants equal to its share of the total Canadian population (3.66%) and appears on its way to meeting that goal. Meeting this target will require immigration levels upwards of 8,000 per year.

4. Immigrant Profiles

Classes of Immigrants

Of the new arrivals to Canada in 2003, 55% were admitted as part of the economic class, 32% were in the family class and 12 % were refugees and protected persons (Figure 5). This 55/45 split between those in the economic and skilled class and those in the family and refugee streams was consistent with the 2002 plan and the commitment Canada has made to "take advantage of [immigration's] economic

Figure 5: Immigration to Canada by Classes, 2003

	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Rest of Canada	All of Canada
FAMILY						
Spouses, Partners and Children	7,635	3,728	295	771	30,236	42,665
Parents and Grandparents	3,827	1,586	105	230	14,119	19,867
Other Family Class	1,173	591	87	155	6,618	8,624
TOTAL	12,635	5,905	487	1,156	50,973	71,156
Percentage of Total for Province	35.9%	37.3%	29.1%	17.8%	31.4%	32.1%
ECONOMIC						
Skilled Workers	16,315	6,453	446	863	82,885	106,962
Business	3,011	387	33	72	4,602	8,105
Provincial Nominees	441	178	174	3,106	520	4,419
Live-in Caregiver Programme	758	832	24	33	1,657	3,304
TOTAL	20,525	7,850	677	4,074	89,664	122,790
Percentage of Total for Province	58.2%	49.6%	40.5%	62.8%	55.3%	55.4%
PROTECTED PERSONS						
Government Assisted Refugees	779	961	419	541	4,810	7,510
Privately Sponsored Refugees	227	446	38	589	1,952	3,252
Protected Persons Landed in Canada	534	388	33	93	10,220	11,268
Refugee Dependants	289	184	12	8	3,468	3,961
TOTAL	1,829	1,979	502	1,231	20,450	25,991
Percentage of Total for Province	5.2%	12.5%	30.0%	19.0%	12.6%	11.7%
OTHER						
Others	249	100	7	29	1,140	1,525
Percentage of Total for Province	0.7%	0.6%	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%	0.7%
TOTAL	35,238	15,834	1,673	6,490	162,227	221,462

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004

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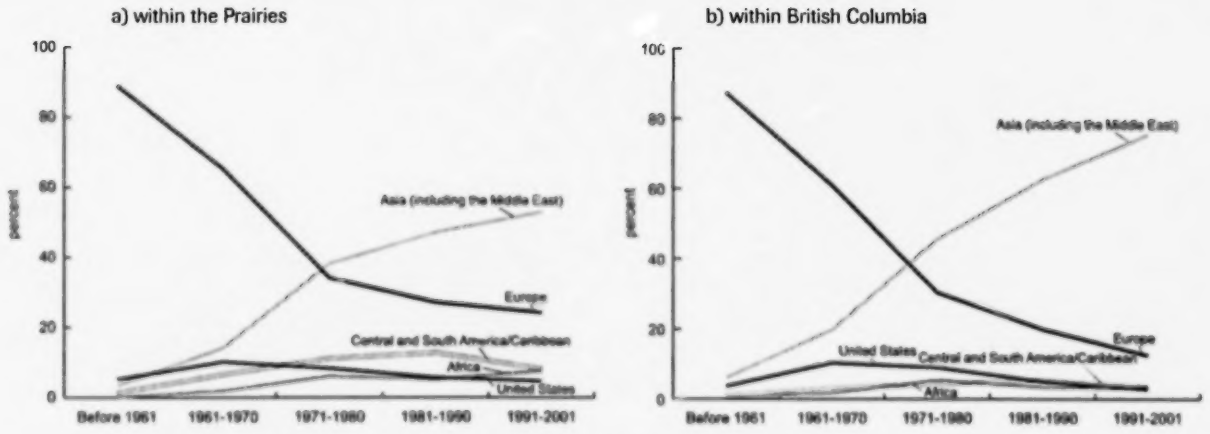
Figure 6: Immigration to Canada by Source Country



Source: Derived by Canada West from Statistics Canada data series 95F0358XCB01004

and social benefits" (CIC 2003). While family reunification and commitment to humanitarian concerns remain integral to Canada's immigration goals, the focus has shifted away from family class immigrants to economic class immigrants.

Shift in Source Countries

For the first 60 years of the 20th century, immigrants to Canada were largely from European countries, including concentrations from the United Kingdom, Germany, Scandinavian countries, France and Italy. Over the last four decades the numbers of immigrants arriving from Europe have diminished, while the western provinces have seen an ever growing number of people arriving from countries in Asia and the Middle East, including China, India, Pakistan, Hong Kong and the Philippines (Statistics Canada 2003a).

Of the 1.8 million immigrants to Canada between 1991 and 2001, 58% were from Asia (including the Middle East). This shift has been driven by a number of factors, including: evolving immigration laws and the removal of the last vestiges of discrimination from immigration policy in Canada; international events that have caused large scale migration; and increased knowledge of Canada, and its society and culture, abroad (Kelley and Trebilcock 2000).

In western Canada this Asian-Middle East shift has been most pronounced in BC. The portion of immigrants coming to the province from this region has increased dramatically in each decade since 1961 to over 75% of all immigrants in the period 1991-2001. Although less pronounced, similar patterns have occurred in the prairies, with over 50% of immigrants between 1991-2001. European immigration trends have exhibited the opposite trend, dropping from nearly 90% of the region before 1961 to only 12% in BC and 24% in the Prairies by 1991-2001 (Figure 6).

As a result of this Asian shift, Canada's visible minority population has significantly increased in recent years. According to the 2001 Census, 13.4% of the population, or about 4 million people, identified themselves as members of a visible minority group. In 1981, the visible minority population was just 4.7%. The visible minority population is growing much faster than the population as a whole. Between 1996 and 2001, the total population grew by 4%, while the visible minority population grew by 25% (Statistics Canada 2003a).

Language and Religion

Accompanying the shift in country of origin have been a number of changes in the languages used and religions practised by immigrants in the West (Figure 7). In all four provinces the portion of immigrants who use English in the home has steadily declined. English use is lowest among recent (1991-2001) immigrants to BC; one-quarter of immigrants speak primarily English at home. In contrast, at 48% of Saskatchewan's recent immigrants (1991-2001) are nearly twice as likely to speak English at home.

On the whole, changes in immigration source patterns in Western Canada has had negligible impact on French speaking activity among immigrants.

Figure 7: Immigrant Language Spoken at Home

MANITOBA	English	French	Non-official	Combination
Before 1961	77.6%	0.5%	19.1%	2.8%
1961-1970	74.1%	0.3%	21.8%	3.7%
1971-1980	58.7%	0.4%	33.5%	7.5%
1981-1990	47.3%	0.4%	43.2%	9.1%
1991-2001	37.4%	0.6%	54.2%	7.7%
SASKATCHEWAN				
Before 1961	87.0%	0.2%	10.4%	2.4%
1961-1970	83.8%	0.8%	12.8%	2.5%
1971-1980	76.5%	0.4%	18.2%	4.9%
1981-1990	59.6%	0.7%	32.6%	7.1%
1991-2001	48.5%	0.8%	43.6%	7.1%
ALBERTA				
Before 1961	85.5%	0.2%	11.6%	2.7%
1961-1970	80.4%	0.4%	16.1%	3.1%
1971-1980	65.9%	0.2%	28.6%	5.2%
1981-1990	48.6%	0.2%	44.6%	6.6%
1991-2001	35.7%	0.6%	56.5%	7.3%
BRITISH COLUMBIA				
Before 1961	86.7%	0.2%	11.1%	2.0%
1961-1970	78.3%	0.3%	18.3%	3.1%
1971-1980	61.5%	0.3%	33.3%	5.0%
1981-1990	42.2%	0.3%	51.9%	5.5%
1991-2001	24.0%	0.2%	69.7%	5.1%

Source: Derived by Canada West from Statistics Canada data series 97F0009XCB01040

Figure 8: Immigrant Religion

MANITOBA	Christian	Muslim	Jewish	Other	None
Before 1961	86.1%	0.5%	3.0%	0.5%	10.3%
1961-1970	80.5%	1.2%	1.6%	3.3%	13.4%
1971-1980	73.1%	1.6%	0.9%	11.3%	13.1%
1981-1990	73.6%	2.2%	0.8%	10.9%	12.4%
1991-2001	67.6%	6.4%	1.1%	10.5%	14.4%
SASKATCHEWAN					
Before 1961	90.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.8%	8.6%
1961-1970	76.6%	0.7%	0.4%	5.4%	16.8%
1971-1980	66.3%	1.9%	0.5%	12.2%	19.1%
1981-1990	59.8%	3.6%	0.5%	13.7%	22.5%
1991-2001	60.9%	8.9%	0.1%	8.5%	21.7%
ALBERTA					
Before 1961	84.9%	0.3%	0.6%	0.9%	13.3%
1961-1970	73.8%	2.1%	0.7%	4.3%	19.0%
1971-1980	56.1%	8.4%	1.0%	12.8%	21.7%
1981-1990	52.4%	7.9%	0.9%	18.2%	20.6%
1991-2001	51.9%	11.8%	0.6%	14.8%	20.9%
BRITISH COLUMBIA					
Before 1961	75.7%	0.1%	0.7%	2.0%	21.5%
1961-1970	63.7%	0.1%	0.9%	8.4%	26.1%
1971-1980	46.7%	5.1%	1.0%	19.8%	27.4%
1981-1990	42.2%	4.9%	0.5%	24.1%	28.3%
1991-2001	35.6%	6.3%	0.5%	22.0%	35.6%

Source: Derived by Canada West from Statistics Canada data series 97F0009XCB01040

Changes in source county has also resulted in changes in the religious composition of immigrants. Across the Prairie provinces the majority of immigrants still come from Christian faiths in spite of a decline in the proportion of European immigrants. BC's higher levels of Asian and Middle East immigrant sources have more dramatically altered these data. Only 36% of the immigrants who came to BC between 1991 and 2001 were of a Christian faith (Figure 8). Increases in Muslim, Others and immigrants without a specified faith account for these decreases.

Education Levels

Immigrants in western Canada are, on average, more highly educated than the Canadian-born resident population–20.5% of immigrants in the West hold at least a bachelor's degree, many holding more than one degree, compared with 13.1% of the Canadian-born population (Figure 9). In Saskatchewan, this education gap is most pronounced–twice as many immigrants hold degrees (20.9%) as in the Canadian-born population (10.3%). On the other hand, in Manitoba the gap is comparatively small at 16.5% for immigrants and 12.3% for the Canadian-born population.

College and technical diplomas are also widely held by immigrants in the West; an additional 28.5% of the immigrant population holds a diploma. Combined, nearly half (49%) of all western Canadian immigrants have earned a degree or diploma, compared to 43% of Canadian-born residents.

Age

Data collected by Statistics Canada on immigrants from 1991-2001 show the majority of immigrants arrive at the working age (Figure 10). An interesting aspect of this demographic profile is the concentration of youth, and their potential impact on the labour market. In ten years, the 13-19 age cohort will be fully engaged in the labour force, and the 0-12 age cohort will be just beginning to enter the labour market. While current working age immigrants can fill current shortages, the predicted future labour shortages may, in fact, be partially filled by immigrant youth.

Figure 9: Immigrant and Canadian-born Education Levels (age 15 and over), 1991-2001

	British Columbia		Alberta		Saskatchewan		Manitoba		WEST	
LEVEL OF EDUCATION	Diploma	Degree	Diploma	Degree	Diploma	Degree	Diploma	Degree	Diploma	Degree
% of Canadian-born	31.0%	13.8%	30.6%	13.7%	27.7%	10.3%	26.1%	12.3%	29.8%	13.1%
% of immigrants	28.7%	20.9%	29.1%	20.8%	26.2%	20.9%	26.0%	16.5%	28.5%	20.5%

Source: Derived by Canada West from Statistics Canada data series 97F0009XCB01040

Figure 10: Age of Immigrant on Arrival, 1991-2001

AGE	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia	WEST
0-12 years	25.3%	23.6%	21.0%	19.4%	20.2%
13-19 years	11.9%	10.0%	11.0%	11.8%	11.6%
20-59 years	59.0%	61.8%	63.1%	63.0%	62.8%
60 years and over	3.8%	5.2%	4.9%	5.7%	5.4%

Source: Derived by Canada West from Statistics Canada data series 97F0009XCB01040

Summary

Western Canada attracts just slightly less than its proportionate share of Canada's immigrant population. Proportionately, the region tends to draw fewer of the economic class of immigrants, and more of family and protected classes. Most of those who arrive in western Canada are of Asian and Middle Eastern origin. Nearly all immigrants to western Canada settle within the major urban centres, therefore the full benefits of immigration are not felt in rural areas. Although immigrants are more highly educated, recent immigrants are not as engaged in the workforce as Canadian-born residents due to a number of structural barriers.

Western Attitudes Towards Immigration

Western Canadians hold a number of unique and varied attitudes towards immigration. As noted earlier, the number of immigrants varies widely by province and so do the economic circumstances of each province. As might be expected from these trends, provinces with a pressing need for high levels of immigration to support their population and economic growth tend be more positive toward immigration. This section will examine the public opinion trends in immigration.

Increasing immigration levels

On the whole, the West is relatively more supportive of increasing immigration than is the rest of Canada, as confirmed in a number of studies (Angus Reid Group 2000; Leger 2002; Palmer 1999). Yet, it must be acknowledged that immigration itself is not a popular notion in Canada. Although most Canadians are likely not very well informed of current levels of immigration, they do have the general impression that we accept too many immigrants. Leger (2002) found that more than half (54%) of Canadians felt we accept too many immigrants, whereas 26% felt we accept too few.

Westerners are somewhat split on the issue of more immigration. In Alberta and BC there is less support of immigration than in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. This split is not entirely unexpected; Alberta and BC are "net gainers" in that they already receive proportionately more migrants (both national and international) than Saskatchewan and Manitoba (Roach 2003).

Immigrants' role in the economy

The more positive attitudes in Saskatchewan and Manitoba towards immigration might be consistent with the associated concerns of economic decline, urban depopulation and out-migration in these provinces. According to a 2000 Angus Reid survey, Saskatchewan and Manitoba residents were the most likely to believe that immigrants make a positive contribution to the economy. Over two-thirds of respondents in these two prairie provinces (68%) felt that immigrants "contribute to Canada's economy" (Angus Reid Group 2000). Albertans, on the other hand, were the most likely to say that immigrants are a negative financial influence; 41% of Alberta respondents felt that immigrants are a "drain on the economy" (Angus Reid Group 2000). It is important to note, however, that although Albertans lead the nation in holding these negative attitudes, they are not held by the majority of Albertans.

Figure 7: Immigrant Language Spoken at Home

MANITOBA	English	French	Non-official	Combination
Before 1961	77.6%	0.5%	19.1%	2.8%
1961-1970	74.1%	0.3%	21.8%	3.7%
1971-1980	58.7%	0.4%	33.5%	7.5%
1981-1990	47.3%	0.4%	43.2%	9.1%
1991-2001	37.4%	0.6%	54.2%	7.7%
SASKATCHEWAN				
Before 1961	87.0%	0.2%	10.4%	2.4%
1961-1970	83.8%	0.8%	12.8%	2.5%
1971-1980	76.5%	0.4%	18.2%	4.9%
1981-1990	59.6%	0.7%	32.6%	7.1%
1991-2001	48.5%	0.8%	43.6%	7.1%
ALBERTA				
Before 1961	85.5%	0.2%	11.6%	2.7%
1961-1970	80.4%	0.4%	16.1%	3.1%
1971-1980	65.9%	0.2%	28.6%	5.2%
1981-1990	49.6%	0.2%	44.6%	6.6%
1991-2001	35.7%	0.6%	56.5%	7.3%
BRITISH COLUMBIA				
Before 1961	86.7%	0.2%	11.1%	2.0%
1961-1970	78.3%	0.3%	18.3%	3.1%
1971-1980	61.5%	0.3%	33.3%	5.0%
1981-1990	42.2%	0.3%	51.9%	5.5%
1991-2001	24.0%	0.2%	69.7%	6.1%

Source: Derived by Canada West from Statistics Canada data series 97F0009XCB01040

Figure 8: Immigrant Religion

MANITOBA	Christian	Muslim	Jewish	Other	None
Before 1961	86.1%	0.5%	3.0%	0.5%	10.3%
1961-1970	80.5%	1.2%	1.6%	3.3%	13.4%
1971-1980	73.1%	1.6%	0.9%	11.3%	13.1%
1981-1990	73.6%	2.2%	0.8%	10.9%	12.4%
1991-2001	67.6%	6.4%	1.1%	10.5%	14.4%
SASKATCHEWAN					
Before 1961	90.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.8%	8.6%
1961-1970	78.6%	0.7%	0.4%	5.4%	16.8%
1971-1980	68.3%	1.9%	0.5%	12.2%	19.1%
1981-1990	59.8%	3.6%	0.5%	13.7%	22.5%
1991-2001	60.9%	8.9%	0.1%	8.5%	21.7%
ALBERTA					
Before 1961	84.9%	0.3%	0.6%	0.9%	13.3%
1961-1970	73.8%	2.1%	0.7%	4.3%	19.0%
1971-1980	58.1%	5.4%	1.0%	12.8%	21.7%
1981-1990	52.4%	7.9%	0.9%	19.2%	20.6%
1991-2001	51.9%	11.6%	0.6%	14.8%	20.9%
BRITISH COLUMBIA					
Before 1961	75.7%	0.1%	0.7%	2.0%	21.5%
1961-1970	63.7%	0.1%	0.9%	8.4%	26.1%
1971-1980	46.7%	0.1%	1.0%	19.8%	27.4%
1981-1990	42.2%	4.9%	0.5%	24.1%	28.3%
1991-2001	35.6%	6.3%	0.5%	22.0%	35.6%

Source: Derived by Canada West from Statistics Canada data series 97F0009XCB01040

Changes in source county has also resulted in changes in the religious composition of immigrants. Across the Prairie provinces the majority of immigrants still come from Christian faiths in spite of a decline in the proportion of European immigrants. BC's higher levels of Asian and Middle East immigrant sources have more dramatically altered these data. Only 36% of the immigrants who came to BC between 1991 and 2001 were of a Christian faith (Figure 8). Increases in Muslim, Others and immigrants without a specified faith account for these decreases.

Education Levels

Immigrants in western Canada are, on average, more highly educated than the Canadian-born resident population–20.5% of immigrants in the West hold at least a bachelor's degree, many holding more than one degree, compared with 13.1% of the Canadian-born population (Figure 9). In Saskatchewan, this education gap is most pronounced–twice as many immigrants hold degrees (20.9%) as in the Canadian-born population (10.3%). On the other hand, in Manitoba the gap is comparatively small at 16.5% for immigrants and 12.3% for the Canadian-born population.

College and technical diplomas are also widely held by immigrants in the West; an additional 28.5% of the immigrant population holds a diploma. Combined, nearly half (49%) of all western Canadian immigrants have earned a degree or diploma, compared to 43% of Canadian-born residents.

Age

Data collected by Statistics Canada on immigrants from 1991-2001 show the majority of immigrants arrive at the working age (Figure 10). An interesting aspect of this demographic profile is the concentration of youth, and their potential impact on the labour market. In ten years, the 13-19 age cohort will be fully engaged in the labour force, and the 0-12 age cohort will be just beginning to enter the labour market. While current working age immigrants can fill current shortages, the predicted future labour shortages may, in fact, be partially filled by immigrant youth.

Figure 9: Immigrant and Canadian-born Education Levels (age 15 and over), 1991-2001

	British Columbia		Alberta		Saskatchewan		Manitoba		WEST	
LEVEL OF EDUCATION	Diploma	Degree	Diploma	Degree	Diploma	Degree	Diploma	Degree	Diploma	Degree
% of Canadian-born	31.0%	13.8%	30.6%	13.7%	27.7%	10.3%	26.1%	12.3%	29.8%	13.1%
% of Immigrants	28.7%	20.9%	29.1%	20.8%	26.2%	20.9%	26.0%	16.5%	28.5%	20.5%

Source: Derived by Canada West from Statistics Canada data series [illegible]

Figure 10: Age of Immigrant on Arrival, 1991-2001

AGE	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia	WEST
0-12 years	25.3%	23.0%	21.0%	19.4%	20.2%
13-19 years	11.9%	10.0%	11.0%	11.8%	11.6%
20-59 years	59.0%	61.8%	63.1%	63.0%	62.8%
60 years and over	3.8%	5.2%	4.9%	5.7%	5.4%

Source: Derived by Canada West from Statistics Canada data series [illegible]

Summary

Western Canada attracts just slightly less than its proportionate share of Canada's immigrant population. Proportionately, the region tends to draw fewer of the economic class of immigrants, and more of family and protected classes. Most of those who arrive in western Canada are of Asian and Middle Eastern origin. Nearly all immigrants to western Canada settle within the major urban centres, therefore the full benefits of immigration are not felt in rural areas. Although immigrants are more highly educated, recent immigrants are not as engaged in the workforce as Canadian-born residents due to a number of structural barriers.

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On the whole, the West is relatively more supportive of increasing immigration than is the rest of Canada, as confirmed in a number of studies (Angus Reid Group 2000; Leger 2002; Palmer 1999). Yet, it must be acknowledged that immigration itself is not a popular notion in Canada. Although most Canadians are likely not very well informed of current levels of immigration, they do have the general impression that we accept too many immigrants. Leger (2002) found that more than half (54%) of Canadians felt we accept too many immigrants, whereas 26% felt we accept too few.

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Immigrants and security concerns

Canadian attitudes towards immigration may be also influenced by a number non-economic factors including the national and international political climate, declining birth rates, current levels of immigration, and domestic security concerns. In particular, terrorism concerns in the wake of September 11th increased public scrutiny of immigration policies. In a post-9/11 survey, 83.5% of Canadians were of the opinion that Canada should be stricter when it comes to immigration (Leger 2001).

The changed political environment after 9/11 has raised some questions about whether domestic security concerns should be paramount to humanitarian ones. In the last couple of years Canada has been labelled as a haven for terrorists because of its perceived lenient immigration laws and poor security measures (Carter 2003). A report released in October 2003 by the US Library of Congress and the Central Intelligence Agency's Narcotics Center states that, "terrorists and international organized crime groups increasingly are using Canada as an operational base and transit country en route to the United States...a generous social welfare system, lax immigration laws, infrequent prosecutions, light sentencing, and long borders and coastlines offer many points and methods of entry that facilitate movements to and from various countries, particularly to the United States" (p. 145).

Canadians also hold reservations about the safety of our immigration policies. Security-driven immigration concerns were mostly strongly held by residents on the prairies where nearly nine in 10 residents in the region felt that Canada should be more strict when it comes to immigration. Unlike much of the previous data on immigration, Alberta and Saskatchewan/ Manitoba respondents are similar when it comes to post-9/11 security concerns. BC residents, on the other hand, do not hold their views as strongly: eight in 10 believe that Canada should be more strict in the wake of 9/11.

In spite of the increased desire for more strict control of immigration, there has not been a similar increase in negative or racist comments directed at people of Arab descent and Muslim faith in western Canada. Leger (2001) found that only one-third of western Canadians reported witnessing any racist or negative comments towards these groups, on par with the national average. These data contrast with Quebec, where a 42% increase in racism towards Arab groups was reported (Leger 2002).

Although there was an increase in the concern about immigration levels in Canada, that shift was less dramatic than what occurred in the United States (Jedwab 2002). In the time following 9/11, concerns in the United States that immigration levels were too high jumped by 17%. A June 2001 survey found that 41% of US respondents favoured a reduction in immigration levels, which shot up to 58% by October 2001 (Jedwab 2002). The shift in Canadian attitudes over the same period moved only slightly–from 40% thinking immigration levels are too high in August 2001 to 44% in a post 9/11 survey.

Importance of immigration

Canada West's (2003) survey of 3,200 western Canadians provides another perspective on immigration in the West. The Looking West 2003 survey asked respondents to rank the importance of attracting immigrants to their province for future provincial prosperity and quality of life. While attracting immigrants was not identified by many as a high priority issue, these data do allow us to identify the characteristics of those persons who view immigration as a high priority.

Respondents in Manitoba were the most likely to rank immigration as a high priority, with nearly twice as many (20.1%) as in British Columbia (10.3%) and well above the regional average of 13.0%. Saskatchewan (18.8%) and Alberta (12.0%) fall in between and further reflect the provincial splits of opinion observed earlier. The magnitude of these data reinforce the strength of the provincial divide; these deviations were the most substantial of any of the demographic criteria measured.

Residents of the larger western cities (15.7%) were more likely to view immigration as a high priority than were the residents of small cities and rural regions. Residents from rural regions and small towns, arguably the areas most in need of an immigration-based population boost, fall below average at 12.1% and 12.0% respectively. Residents in medium cities (8.5%) were the least likely to indicate that immigration is a high priority.

Demographic groups rating immigration as a high priority include university graduates (17.1%) or graduate degree holders (17.7%), full-time employed persons (14.4%), and persons aged 55 and over (15.2%). Interestingly, significant

variations were not found with respect to federal voting preferences, income levels, and gender.

In summary, these findings could reflect a number of policy and immigration realities in the West. BC and Alberta have higher than average levels of immigrants and well-publicized provincial concerns related to rapid growth in their cities. The value of increased immigration may seem to be less pressing in these communities and therefore public support for increased immigration is relatively lower. Alternatively, public acceptance of increased immigration by residents of Manitoba and Saskatchewan may reflect well-publicized government and public efforts to grow their provincial populations. In all cases, however, the troubling point remains that Canadians, including western Canadians, believe we accept too many immigrants.

Conclusion

Western Canada's future need for labour, for a stable tax base to fund future social program commitments, and population growth concerns all suggest an increasingly important role for immigration policy in the future of western Canada. This message hasn't been lost on the provinces. All four western provinces now actively market themselves abroad to immigrants through recent federal-provincial agreements. Immigration represents an economic and social opportunity for western Canada.

The process of transition from the potential "economic opportunity" of immigration to realizing actual "economic advantages" will require good immigration policy. Positive outcomes depend on: our ability to develop programs of integration that work better and that start before immigrants arrive; professional associations and governments working together to best recognize the skills and education that immigrants possess and to target and select immigrants that possess those skills that will be taken as equivalent; and reworking selection criteria to allow for the largest possible disbursement of immigrants into high needs areas such as rural and smaller centres by looking for immigrants with backgrounds that are the best fit.

In spite of the perceived value of increasing immigration, it is clear that public opinion across the West lags well behind in recognizing this value. Increased and open provincial immigration policies do not have strong support from the majority of the Canadian public—reflective of a lack of understanding of the economic and social value of immigration. The successful integration and retention of immigrants in western Canadian communities will require a shift in this thinking to accompany any shifts in immigration policy. The first step to encouraging that change in mindset will be to provide good information to the public on the positive contributions of immigrants. ■

Appendix- A Brief History of Canada's Immigration Policy

Canada's immigration policy has been largely dictated by economic necessity. Building the railway, settling the Prairies, creating a pool of skilled immigrants - these are all economic realities that have shaped policy. However, discrimination on the part of those intent on maintaining a homogeneous population has also been a considerable driver in formulating policy. Despite this discrimination, economic and humanitarian goals have emerged as the dominant factors, as seen in the historical progression of immigration legislation.

Era	Immigration Policy
Building Canada: Confederation-1896	1872: In an effort to attract newcomers to the West, the Dominian Lands Act offers quarter sections of land for ten dollars.
	1881: The building of the Canadian Pacific Railway begins. Labour is needed and Chinese labourers are brought in. The high concentration of Chinese in BC is a cause of discomfort for the local population.
	1885: The Chinese Immigration Act is brought in to limit the numbers of Chinese immigrating to Canada through a head tax and document restrictions. This is the first use of immigration law to control the supply and racial composition of immigrants.
An Agricultural Policy: 1896-1914	1896: Increased demand for wheat in the world market and fears of American expansionism results in the promotion of agricultural settlers on the Canadian prairies. The desirable settlers are considered to be the Americans, British, and Scottish.
	1908: The Chinese head tax is raised and continuous journey legislation is passed, making immigration from areas such as Asia all but impossible. The legislation stipulates that immigrants are only permitted entry if they arrive in Canada in one continuous journey.
	1910: New Act focuses on immigrant's original country, giving the government room to discriminate.
	1910-1914: 1.6 million immigrants land in Canada and wheat production more than triples.
The War Years: 1914-1944	1914: WW1 brings immigration to a halt.
	1920s: Post War, world demand for agriculture and Canada's industrial growth requires that Canada be opened up again.
	1923: Chinese Exclusion Act makes discrimination formal.
	1930s: Exclusion Act tightened further. The Great Depression is a major factor in stemming immigration during this period until the end of WWII.
	1931: Order in Council passes, preventing immigration of all groups except for wives and children of those already in Canada, farmers who had sufficient capital to start farming immediately, and British or American citizens with pre-arranged employment.
	1938-1939: Canada refuses to admit Jewish refugees.
The Post-War Boom and an Economic Shift: 1945-1962	1946: Acute shortage of labour in agriculture, mining, and forestry.
	1947-1952: Businesses encourage government to increase immigration flows by tapping into the war's displaced persons. Significant numbers of displaced persons flow into Canada and are defined as a separate stream (refugees).
	1947: Mackenzie King's government introduces a new policy, directed at fostering growth through selection of those who could be easily absorbed into Canada's economy. Widened classes of acceptable persons with preferred status granted to European nations, but still no admittance of those from Asian countries.
	1948: Chinese Immigration Act repealed. For the first time, large numbers of immigrants admitted from Italy and Southern Europe.
	1950s: Canadian government offers skilled immigrants interest free loans (Assisted Loan Passage Scheme) to assist in traveling expenses.
	1952: New act intended to attract unskilled labour – "a consistent flow without casting too wide a net", thus giving the government control over the racial composition of immigrants.
	1957: Canada faces labour gap of higher-skilled and technical professionals, which cannot be filled by the domestic market or through traditional immigrant source countries such as Britain and other European countries.
	Early 1960s: Source country is de-emphasized.

Significant Reforms: 1962-1990	1962: The Diefenbaker government sets out to eliminate all traces of racial discrimination from immigration law.
	1962: Richard Bell, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, suggests an immigration target of 1% of the population.
	1966: The government releases The White Paper. It lays out the government's intention to establish a non-discriminatory regime based on a points system.
	1967: The Pearson government devises a points system to find those immigrants who would fit the needs of the Canadian economy.
	Late 1970s: Some immigrants claim refugee status to circumvent points system, and make use of due process.
	1976: New Act creates three classes of immigrants: family reunification, refugees, and independent applicants with skills appropriate for the labour market. Emphasis is placed on family reunification, with independent applicants assessed on point system.
	1978: The beginning of enhanced provincial involvement. Quebec signs agreement with federal government to guarantee greater federal-provincial cooperation on immigration policy.
	1982: Recession curtails immigration; independent applicants are only allowed entry if they have pre-arranged employment.
	1985: Report from the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration states that counteracting the effects of the aging population and declining fertility should be a consideration in immigration policy, in addition to labour market requirements.
	1988: Bill C-55 creates the Immigration and Refugee Board to conduct hearings on refugee determination.
Provincial Involvement and Changes in Immigrant Composition: 1991-2002	1990s: The composition of immigrants begins to shift from the family reunification class to economic principal applicants.
	1991: The Canada-Quebec Accord (McDougall-Gagnon-Tremblay Agreement), allows Quebec to choose its own economic principal immigrants, and receive a proportion of immigrants similar to its share in the Canadian population.
	1992: Changes to refugee policy include reduced powers of appeal, granting immigration officers the right to refuse refugees, and an efficient system to deport unsuccessful claimants and criminals.
	1996: Manitoba pilots first provincial nominee program with sewing machine operators.
	1998: Intergovernmental agreements signed with Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia.
	1999: Intergovernmental agreements signed with New Brunswick and Newfoundland.
	2002: Intergovernmental agreement signed with Alberta.
	2002: Annual reporting to Parliament required (begun under the previous Act in 1976). New legislation addresses the dual concerns of bringing those with flexible skills into Canada, while striving to be efficient, consistent and secure.

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